

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at an Obama Victory Fund 2012 Fundraiser in New York City
June 4, 2012

The President. Hello New York! Thank you! Well, thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody have a seat.

Audience members. Four more years!

The President. Thank you. I plan on getting four more years, because of you.

Let me just say some thank-yous at the front here. First of all, you've got an outstanding attorney general. Please give Eric Schneiderman a big round of applause. He is doing the right thing on behalf of consumers and working people all across this great State and having an influence all across the country.

I want to thank my dear friend, Jon Bon Jovi, who has been a great supporter for a long, long time. I have to say that the only thing worse than following Jon is following Jon and Bill Clinton. [*Laughter*]

I want to acknowledge—Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney is here. Where is Carolyn? Thank you, Carolyn. Party Chair Jacobs, thanks for the great work you've done. I want to thank all of you who helped to make this event possible tonight.

And most of all, I want to thank the guy behind me here.

President Clinton and I had a chance to talk over dinner before we came out, and we talk about a lot of things. We talk about basketball. [*Laughter*] We talk about our daughters, and agree that you can't beat daughters. Sons who are out there, we love you too—[*laughter*]—but I'm just saying, we bond on that front. We both agree that we have improved our gene pool because we married outstanding women.

But whatever the topic, whatever the subject, what I was reminded of as I was talking to President Clinton is just how incredibly passionate he is about this country and the people in it. You don't talk to Bill without hearing at least 30 stories about extraordinary Americans who are involved in clean energy or starting a whole new project to teach kids math or figuring out how to build some new energy-efficient building or you name it. And it's that passion and connection that he has to the American people that is infectious. And it's a curiosity and a love for people that is now transforming the world.

So I could not be prouder to have called him President. I could not be prouder to know him as a friend. And I could not be more grateful for him taking the time to be here tonight. And I thank him for putting up with a very busy Secretary of State. [*Laughter*]

Now, the reason I'm here tonight is not just because I need your help. It's because the country needs your help. If you think about why we came together back in 2008, it wasn't about me. It wasn't even necessarily just about the Democratic Party. It was about a common set of values that we held dear, a set of beliefs that we had about America, a belief that if you're willing to work hard, in this country you should be able to make it. You should be able to find a job that pays a living wage. You should be able to own a home, send your kids to college, retire with dignity and respect, not go bankrupt when you get sick; that everybody in this country—regardless of what you look like, where you come from, whether you're Black, White, gay,

straight, Hispanic, disabled, not—doesn't matter, if you're willing to put in the effort this is a place where you make dreams happen. And by you putting in that effort, not only do you do well for yourself but you build the country in the process.

And we had seen that those values were eroding, a sense that that bedrock compact that we make with each other was starting to diminish. We had seen a surplus—a historic surplus—wasted away on tax cuts for folks who didn't need them and weren't even asking for them. Suddenly surpluses turned to deficits. We had seen two wars fought on a credit card. We had seen a recklessness of a few almost bring the entire system to collapse.

And there was a sense that, although a few of us were doing really, really well, that you had a growing number of folks who were struggling just to get by no matter how hard they worked.

So what we set out to do in 2008 was reclaim that basic American promise. And it wasn't easy, and many of you who supported me certainly—you guys didn't do it because it was easy. When you support a guy named Barack Hussein Obama for the Presidency you know that's not a sure thing. *[Laughter]* But you did it because you sensed that the country was ready for change.

Now, we didn't know at the time—we knew that there had been a decade of problems, that since this man had left office we had been going in the wrong direction. We didn't realize how this would culminate in the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. As Bill said, the month I was sworn in, 800,000 jobs lost. We had lost 3 million before the election had even taken place.

But we didn't give up. We didn't quit, because that's not what the American people do. And so all across this country, you had folks who just dug in. They focused on what was necessary. And I do believe we implemented the right policies. When folks said that we should let Detroit go bankrupt, we said, no, we're not going to let over a million jobs go. We're not going to let an iconic industry waste away.

And so we brought workers together and management, and now GM is back on top, and we've seen more growth in the U.S. auto industry and more market share than we've seen in a very, very long time. And manufacturing is coming back. Even though that decision wasn't popular, we made the right decision.

We made the right decision in starting to free up credit again so that companies could borrow and small businesses could keep their doors open. We made the right decision when it came to ensuring that all across this country, States got help to keep teachers and firefighters and police officers on the job. We made the right decision in making sure that we used this opportunity to rebuild big chunks of America: our roads and our bridges and our rail lines.

So we made a lot of good policy decisions. But the reason we came back is ultimately because of the American people, because of their resilience and their strength. They made it happen. They decided, you know what, maybe I'll retrain for school. A small business decided, I'm going to keep my doors open even though it's very hard to make payroll right now.

One of the great privileges of being President is you go to every corner of the country and you see people from every walk of life, and it makes you optimistic about the American people. Even over these last 3½ years, as tough as things have been, it made me more optimistic about the American people, that we have all the ingredients for success.

It's because of them that we've seen more than 4 million jobs created, more than 800,000 jobs just this year alone. It's because of them that we're seeing more manufacturing jobs coming back than any time since the 1990s.

But—and this is where you come in—all that work that we've done, all that effort, that stands to be reversed because we've had an opposition that has had a fundamentally different vision of where we should take America. They had it from the day I was sworn in. They made a determination that politics would trump what was needed to move this country forward. And they have tried to put sand in the gears in Congress ever since.

And now they've got a nominee who is expressing support for an agenda that would reverse the progress we've made and take us back to the exact same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. And the reason we're here today is because we're not going back. We're going forward. We have worked too hard and too long to right the ship and move us in the right direction. We're not going backwards, we're going forwards. That's what we're doing, New York. And we're going to do it with your help.

Now, the reason that they think they may be able to pull this off is because things are still tough. There are a lot of folks still hurting out there; too many folks still looking for work, too many people whose homes are still underwater. So we know we've got more to do. That's why I'm running again, because our job isn't finished yet. And this election in some ways is going to be even more consequential than 2008, because the choices are going to be starker this time.

Keep in mind, when I ran in 2008, I was running against a Republican who believed in climate change, believed in immigration reform, believed in campaign finance reform, had some history of working across the aisle. We had profound disagreements, but even during the midst of the financial crisis there was an agreement of the need for action to create jobs and create growth early.

We don't have that this time. My opponent, Governor Romney, is a patriotic American. He has seen enormous financial success, and God bless him for that. He has got a beautiful family. But his vision of how you move this country forward is what Bill Clinton said, the same agenda as the previous administration, except on steroids. So it's not enough just to maintain tax cuts for the wealthy, we're going to double tax cuts. We're going to do even more of the same. It's not enough just to roll back the regulations that we put in place to make sure that, for example, the financial system is transparent and working effectively so we don't have taxpayer bailouts anymore, we're going to do even more to eliminate regulations that have kept our air clean and our water clean and protected our kids for 20, 30 years.

When you look at the budget that they've put forward, they're not just talking about rolling back Obamacare; they're talking about rolling back the New Deal. [*Laughter*] And that's not an exaggeration.

And so there's an enormous amount at stake. And we're going to have to make sure that in this election, we are describing clearly what's at stake. And we shouldn't be afraid of this debate, because we've got the better argument. We have got the better argument.

It's not just a matter of being able to say the change that we brought about in lifting the auto industry back, that's something we're proud of. It's not just the 4.3 million jobs. It's not just the fact that 2.5 million young people have health insurance that didn't have it before. It's not just the fact that, as a consequence of our policies, millions of young people are getting Pell grants and have the capacity to go to college who didn't have it before. It's not just the track record I've amassed over the last 3½ years that I am proud of. But it's also the fact that when

you look at our history, America has not grown, it has not prospered, it has not succeeded with a philosophy that says, "you're all on your own."

That's not how we built this country. The reason we became an economic superpower is because for all our individual initiative, all our entrepreneurship, all our belief in personal responsibility, despite all those things, what we've also understood is there's certain things we do better together. Creating a public school system that works so that everybody gets educated—we understand that.

The first Republican President understanding we built a transcontinental railroad to stitch this country together—he understood that there's certain things we do better together. Investments in the National Academy of Sciences, investment in land-grant colleges, Eisenhower building the Interstate Highway System, my grandfather and his generation going to college on the GI bill, building the Hoover Dam, building the Golden Gate Bridge, these things we did together. And it created a platform where everybody had a chance, everybody got a fair shot, everybody did their fair share, everybody played by the same rules.

If you look at our history, the reason why we have the best capital markets in the world—the reason why Wall Street is the center of finance—because we had rules in place that made us the most transparent, where investors could trust if they put their money there, they weren't going to be cheated. You had a strong SEC. You had FDIC. You had an entire infrastructure that allowed our capital markets to thrive. That's been a strength, not a weakness.

Throughout our history, there have been certain things that we have to do together. And what was true in the past is true now as well. So that's what's at stake in this election. I'm not going to go back to the days when suddenly our young people can't afford to go to college just to pay for tax cuts for me and Bill Clinton.

We're not going to go back to the day where 30 million people can't get health insurance despite working two jobs, where young people can't stay on their parent's policies or seniors suddenly find prescription drugs more expensive again. We're not going to go back to the days when suddenly women don't have preventive care or we eliminate funding for Planned Parenthood. We're not going back to those days. I want my daughters to have the same opportunities as our sons. And I want our women to have the same ability to control their health care decisions as anybody else. We're not going backwards.

We're not going to go back to the days when you couldn't serve in our military and at the same time admit who it is that you loved. We're moving forward with an agenda of dignity and respect for everybody.

We're not going to go back to the days when folks thought somehow there was a conflict between economic growth and looking after our environment and good stewardship for the next generation. We're not going back to those days.

But we're going to have to fight for it. This is not going to be an easy race. Because of the Citizens United decision, we're seeing hundreds of millions of dollars spent all across this country—unprecedented numbers. We haven't seen this kind of spending. There's never been this amount of negative spending before. There was a brief—a newspaper just printed, somebody had evaluated negative ads—70 percent of our ads have been positive; 70 percent of their ads have been negative. And I suspect that ratio could become even more pronounced as the weeks go by.

And as I said, folks out there are still anxious and they're still scared about the future. And so what the other side is counting on is fear and frustration; that that in and of itself is going to be good enough, because they're sure not offering any new ideas. All they're offering is the same old ideas that didn't work then and won't work now.

Even when it comes to their big issue of deficits and debt, as President Clinton just mentioned, the truth is, is that the two Presidents over the last 30 years, 40 years, who've had the lowest increases in Government spending, you're looking at them right here. They're on this stage. They are on this stage.

And the agenda that we've put forward—which says let's put people to work right now rebuilding our roads and our bridges and putting teachers back in the classroom to accelerate growth now at the same time as we couple it with long-term spending restraint—that's a recipe that works. We've seen it work before. We saw it work in the nineties. There's no reason why it wouldn't work now. And that will allow us to make sure that we can still invest in our future.

As I travel around the world—and I know President Clinton does, as well—you talk to people; nothing gets me more frustrated when I hear, sometimes, reports in the press about America's decline, because around the world there's nobody who wouldn't trade places with us. We've got the best universities, the most productive workers, the best entrepreneurs, the best scientists. We've got all the ingredients we need to make it work. Now we just need the best politics. Now we just need the best politics. And that's what this election is going to be all about.

So the bottom line is this: All of you, you're going to have to work not just as hard as we did in 2008, we're going to need you to work harder. One of the things we learned in 2008 is for all the negative ads, for all the rough-and-tumble of politics, for all the distortions and just plain nonsense that you sometimes hear, when folks come together, when citizens come together and insist that it's time for a change, guess what, change happens.

And what was true then is just as true now. And I want you guys to know that it is true that my hair is grayer—I haven't quite caught up to Bill yet—[laughter]—but I'm getting there. Those of us who have this awesome privilege of holding this office, we end up showing a few dings and dents along the way. That's inevitable. But I am more determined now than I was in 2008. I am more inspired by America now than I even was then, because I've seen more of this country, and I've seen its strength and I've seen its passion. I've seen what's possible.

I've seen the changes we've already brought. And it shouldn't make us complacent, but it should make us confident about the changes that we can bring about in the future. It means that we're going to be able to do even more to double clean energy. It means we're going to be able to do even more to bring back manufacturing. We're going to be able to do more to put people back to work. We're going to be able to make sure that we're a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

All those things on our checklist that we haven't yet gotten done, we will get done. But we're only going to get it done because of you. I'm only going to get it done because of you.

You know, I used to say that I'm not a perfect man—Michelle will tell you—and I'll never be a perfect President. No President is. But I promised you I would always tell you what I thought, I'd always tell you where I stood, and I'd wake up every single day just thinking about how I can make the lives of the American people a little bit better, and I'd work as hard as I knew how to make that happen. And I have kept that promise. I have kept that promise because I still believe in you. And I hope you still believe in me.

Because if you're willing to join me this time out, and knock on doors, and make phone calls, and get out there and talk to your friends and talk to your neighbors, I promise you we will finish what we started in 2008. We will not go backward. We will go forward. And we will remind the entire world just why it is the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you, New York. I love you. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:40 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Jon Bon Jovi; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, wife, and Chelsea Clinton, daughter, of former President William J. Clinton; Jay S. Jacobs, chairman, New York State Democratic Party; 2008 Republican Presidential nominee Sen. John S. McCain; and Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of former President Clinton.

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Locations: New York City.

Names: Bon Jovi, Jon; Clinton, Chelsea; Clinton, Hillary Rodham; Clinton, William J.; Jacobs, Jay S.; Maloney, Carolyn B.; McCain, John S.; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Romney, W. Mitt; Schneiderman, Eric T.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Congressional spending restraint; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Financial regulations, strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Household incomes, decline; Economy, national : Income inequality, increase; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Elections : Campaign finance laws; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job losses; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; New York : Democratic Party events; New York : President's visit; State, Department of : Secretary; Taxation : Tax relief.

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